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For Immediate Release:
Tuesday, September 7, 2004
DCHD NR 2004-020

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News Release

Taking The Safety Pledge

Davis County Health, UDOH and Lincoln Elementary Observe Green Ribbon Month

(Farmington, Utah) – Students and parents across Utah are taking the Green Ribbon pledge this month, promising to walk and drive safely in school zones and neighborhoods.

September is Green Ribbon Month, an annual safety initiative designed to reduce the numbers of pedestrian deaths and injuries in Utah. Utah Department of Health data show that every year an average of 1,100 Utah pedestrians are struck by motor vehicles and 40 are killed.

For the last 10 years, the Salt Lake-Ogden metro area has been ranked among the 18 most dangerous in the country for pedestrians. And Utah's pedestrian fatality rate is also the 20th highest in the U.S. In response to those numbers, the Davis County SAFE KIDS Coalition and Utah Highway Safety Office launched the Green Ribbon Month project in 1998. Since then it has spread statewide.

“We have to get a handle on this important safety issue,” said Jeri Boren, a health educator at the Davis County Health Department. “Green Ribbon Month is a great way to remind all of us of the dangers on our streets, and to get us thinking about how to reduce the risk,” she said.

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One of this year's biggest efforts gets underway today at Lincoln Elementary in Layton, the site of a recent serious auto-pedestrian crash, where a mother and her three children were struck in a crosswalk trying to get to the school. They survived, but it was a wake-up call for school officials.

"The safety of our children is the most important thing," said Lincoln Elementary Principal Richard Baird. "We are having this event today to demonstrate that we all need to continually address these safety concerns to help our children stay safer going to and from school," he said.

To make the point, the Green Ribbon program features pledge forms for both walkers and drivers. Students pledge to walk only on sidewalks whenever they're available, and to cross only at crosswalks. Drivers sign pledges and tie green ribbons on their cars, promising to drive five miles *under* posted speed limits in school zones and neighborhoods.

Lincoln Elementary PTA Safety Commissioner Julene Jepson says safety isn't just for school.

"As a PTA, we want parents involved in educating children and each other about staying safe," she said. "That means all day, every day, at school, in neighborhoods, and even in our own driveways."

Lincoln students and staff will observe Green Ribbon Month with a week of activities that will drive home pedestrian and motor vehicle safety messages. "Getting to school shouldn't be like navigating a war zone," said Baird.

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NOTE TO MEDIA: The media are invited to attend a news conference beginning at noon Tuesday, September 7, 2004. Students, parents and teachers will be on hand signing pledges and will be available to talk about traffic safety challenges in their community. Lincoln Elementary is located at 591 West 2000 North, Layton, Utah, 84101. For more information, call Bob Ballew or Steve McDonald at the numbers above.